

CranioSacral Therapy SomatoEmotional Release

by Ines Devulder

The origin of CranioSacral Therapy can be traced to the accidental discovery of the craniosacral system during a seemingly routine surgery in 1970.

Osteopathic physician John Upledger first observed the craniosacral system during a neck surgery. This observation became the basis for what is fast becoming one of the world's leading natural therapies.

CranioSacral Therapy (CST) is a gentle, non-invasive, yet effective type of hands-on body treatment that is helpful for infants and children as well as adults.

CST works by helping the body's natural healing mechanisms dissipate the negative effects of stress on the central nervous system.

CranioSacral System

The craniosacral system consists of the membranes and fluid that surround and support the brain and spinal cord. It extends from the bones of the head (cranium) down to the bones at the base of the spine (sacrum). The fluid within the membranes is continuously draining and refilling. The filling and draining creates gentle, rhythmic, expanding and contracting movements that can be felt anywhere in the body by a trained therapist using a touch generally no heavier than the weight of 50 euro cents coin.

These movements are the craniosacral rhythm.

The role of this system in the development and performance of the brain and spinal cord is so vital that an imbalance or dysfunction in it can cause sensory, motor and/or neurological disabilities.

What conditions can CST help?

The extremely light touch involved in the application of CST makes it a safe approach for children, infants and newborns with early traumas, including birth trauma. They especially can benefit from the timely identification and compressions release in the craniosacral system, thereby preventing future difficulties such as learning disabilities or hyperactivity.

CST can help with the body changes of pregnancy. Old and new discomforts may appear which can be alleviated and released in order for the mother's body to be in the best condition to give birth.

After birth, craniosacral therapy can help the mother's body return to its non-pregnant condition, particularly if the birth has been difficult or there have been complications or difficult interventions. Sometimes postnatal depression and breastfeeding problems may occur, which can be helped.

Following birth, babies may be left with unresolved patterns of compression and shock. This is especially true when the birth has been traumatic, requiring interventions such as forceps, ventouse extraction or caesarean sections, but even the easiest birth may leave some stress and compression.

CST is one method of helping the baby to clear its system of birth traumas, and a check-up treatment within the first 2 weeks of birth is always useful, even if there is no apparent problem. Ideally, children should continue to receive CST periodically throughout childhood as they adapt to the process of growing up.

Some conditions that are treated with CST include: colic, ear infections, constant crying, weakened immunity, disturbed sleep, irritability, restlessness, sucking and feeding (reflux) problems...

Because of its influence on the functioning of the central nervous system, CST can benefit the body in a number of ways. Among CST's largest client group are those suffering chronic symptoms. It is beneficial to those with head, neck or back injuries resulting from an accident, be it from a car, sports or work mishap or from a fall.

Another important area of effectiveness is with stress-related problems: insomnia, fatigue, headaches, poor digestion, anxiety and temporal-mandibular-joint dysfunction are just a few examples.

Other conditions for which CST has shown to be effective are various sensory disorders. Among these are eye-motor co-ordination problems, autism, dyslexia, loss of taste or smell, tinnitus, vertigo and neuralgias such as sciatica....

Somato Emotional Release (SER)

Somato Emotional Release (SER) is a therapeutic process that helps rid the mind and body of residual effects of past trauma and associated negative responses. Dr. John Upledger and biophysicist Dr. Zvi Kami discovered that the body often retains -rather than dissipates - physical forces as the result of accident, injury or emotional trauma. Following trauma, the body isolates the “energy cyst.” Therapists in Somato Emotional Release help the client physically identify and expel the energy cyst through re-experiencing and resolving the unpleasant incidents.”

Somato Emotional Release is an aspect of CranioSacral Therapy (CST). Through therapeutic dialogue, imagery and touch, the client and therapist invite the co-operation of the body and conscious mind to release the residual effects of past injuries or negative experiences.

CranioSacral Therapy versus Cranial Osteopathy

Often confused, these are very different therapies. In the early 1900s Dr. William Sutherland (D.O.) developed a system of examination and treatment for the bones of the skull that became known as cranial osteopathy. In 1970 Dr. John Upledger (D.O.) discovered the craniosacral system, which led to the origin of Craniosacral Therapy.

The focus of cranial osteopathy remains on manipulating the sutures of the skull. Craniosacral therapy focuses not on the bones of the skull, but on the membranes and cerebrospinal fluid surrounding the brain and spinal cord. The bones of the skull are involved only in that they serve as ‘handles’ for the practitioner to use to access and affect the membrane system that attaches to those bones.

Another major difference between the two approaches is in the quality of touch. In general, the manipulations used in cranial osteopathy are often heavy and directive. Practitioners of Craniosacral therapy usually use a light touch, scientifically measured to be between 5 and 10 grams. This gentle quality often belies the effectiveness of the therapy.

Through an extensive series of studies and experiments, Upledger and his team demonstrated how the craniosacral system could be used to assess and improve numerous health problems involving the brain and spinal cord.

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About the author

Ines Devulder qualified as a physiotherapist in 1987. She has lived and worked in Germany, South-Africa and United Arab Emirates. In 1997, in Cape Town, she first encountered CranioSacral Therapy and it became her passion. Since then she has studied at the Upledger Institute in Belgium and Netherlands. After 16 years abroad, she decided to return to Belgium and open her own CranioSacral Therapy practice – Stillpoint. At – Stillpoint – she welcomes everyone warmly especially newborns, baby's and children.